

Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (FEP)

Talking Points

- NOAA wants to restore, enhance, and protect living resources and their habitats and ecological relationships to sustain all fisheries and provide for a balanced Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.
- We need to move away from single-species fisheries management and toward a holistic approach that considers not just the targeted fisheries species, but other living resources, habitat, and water quality.
- NCBO organized and participated on a panel of experts to develop a Fisheries Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the Chesapeake Bay that was released in 2004. FEP builds a cooperative ecosystem approach to Bay resource management between state and federal partners with jurisdiction over coastal and estuarine areas.
- The FEP contains information on the structure and function of the Bay ecosystem so that managers can be aware of the effects their fisheries management decisions have on the ecosystem and the effects other components of the ecosystem have on its fisheries.
- The FEP is the first step toward effective ecosystem-based management that is desperately needed in the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay FEP has the opportunity to serve as a model for ecosystem planning and management in other regions.

Background

- Fisheries management is a very complex issue, and many factors need to be considered.
- Traditionally, fisheries managers have used single-species management as the primary way to build sustainable fisheries. NCBO is advocating a step-by-step process to move from single-species management to a holistic ecosystem approach.
- Studies have shown that single-species management fails to consider the effects that other species, habitat, and water quality may have on the target species.
- The FEP provides fisheries managers with a guidance document to support ecosystem-based fishery management approaches in the Chesapeake Bay.
- The FEP recommends actions for living resource managers to implement and provides them with a clear description and understanding of the fundamental physical, biological, and human/institutional structures of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.
- The FEP also recommends research to enhance knowledge of the ecosystem and its fisheries in support of long-term management objectives.
- Chesapeake 2000 Agreement NOAA commitments related to fisheries:
 - develop multi-species fisheries management plans (FMPs) by 2005
 - implement multi-species FMPs and an ecosystem approach to management by 2007